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THIS IS YOUR FAULT, WIRE!
YOUR ACTIONS HAVE TRAPPED ME ONCE AGAIN IN THIS ELECTRONIC WASTELAND.
PREPARE TO PAY THE CONSEQUENCES.
NO. LISTEN. YOU'RE STILL IN CYBERSHOCK.
THE MONDO-INTERFACE FUNCTIONS YOU SIPHONED FROM THE PALOMA PROGRAM SCRAMBLED YOUR BRAIN!
YOU WERE DOWNLOADING MORE INFORMATION THAN EVEN YOU COULD HANDLE.
I HAD NO OTHER CHOICE BUT TO TERMINATE THE PALOMA SYSTEM, AND SHUT YOU DOWN.
AND THAT STILL DIDN'T STOP YOU FROM RETREATING INTO THAT VICTORIAN PSYCHOSIM RECOVERY PROGRAM YOU MANIFESTED.*
YOU DARE QUESTION MY SANITY-- WHEN I CAN DESTROY YOU WITH ONE WAVE OF MY HAND?
*See Doom 2099 #8 & 9 For a Full explanation. --Your Pal Joey

DOOM, I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY!
IF WE KEEP WASTING ENERGY LIKE THIS, WE'LL DE-REZ INTO RANDOM BYTES, SCATTERED TO THE CYBERSPACE WIND.
DON'T YOU WANT TO OFF-LINE BACK TO LATVERIA?
REMEMBER LATVERIA?
YOUR WORDS ARE ONLY STATIC TO ME. I REFUSE TO LET THEM CONFUSE ME.
I WILL REGAIN MY POWER AND RETAKE CYBERSPACE--
THEN, NOTHING WILL STAND IN MY W--
ZKRAAAKK
... DON'T KNOW WHERE THAT ENERGY FIELD CAME FROM... BUT IT BOUGHT ME SOME TIME...

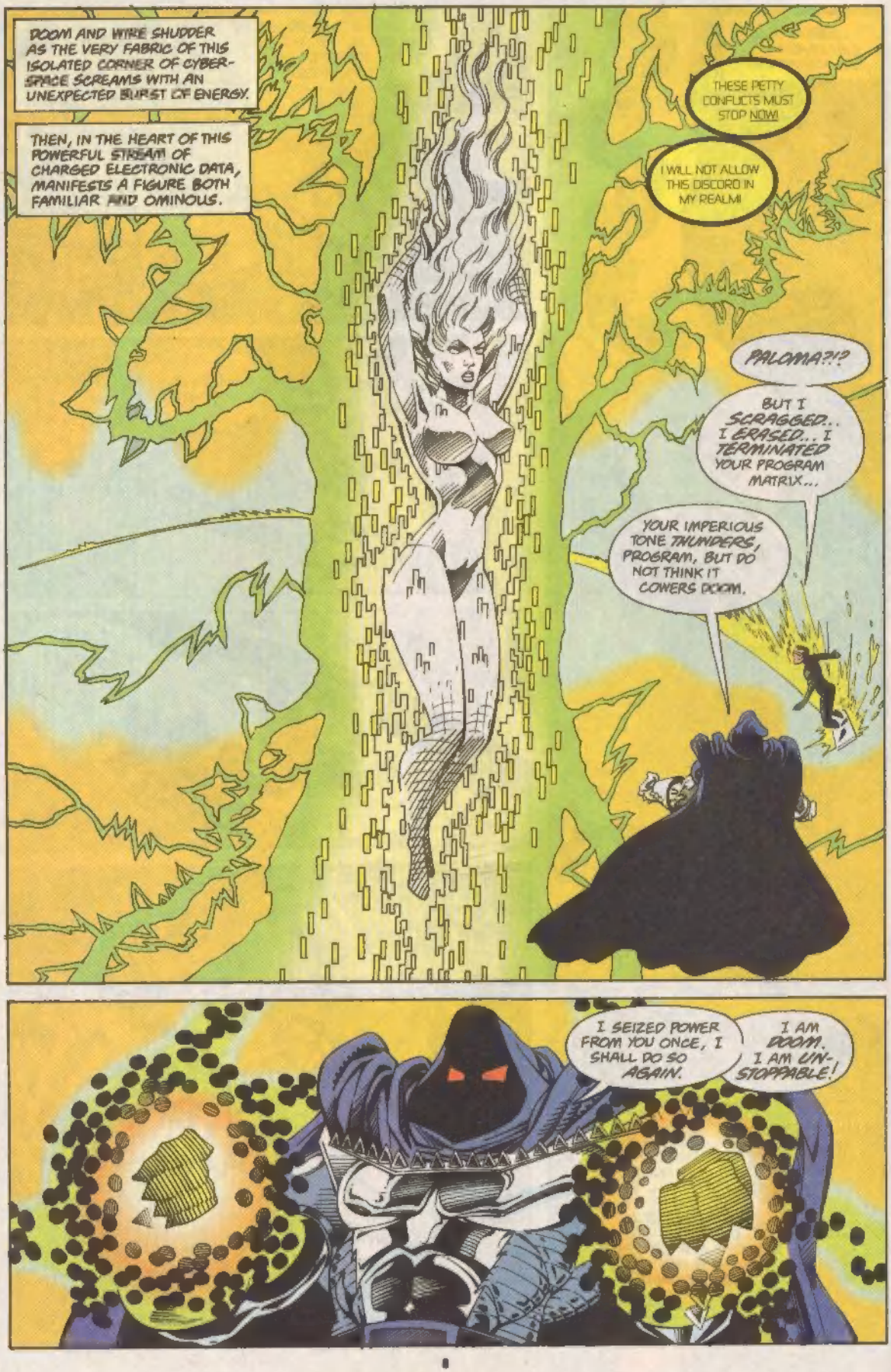
"... AND TIME IS SOMETHING I'M RUNNING OUT OF FAST!"
DOOM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS!
HE JAMMED THE CICADA'S CONTROLS--
--SENT THE ZEPPELIN PLUMMETING TO EARTH.

I TAKE COMFORT THAT YOU TWO COMMONERS WILL DIE WITH ME--
--KNOWING THE LEADER TO WHOM YOU FOOLISHLY GAVE YOUR LOYALTY FOUND YOU EXPENDABLE.
SHUT UP, DEVARGAS! LAST THING I NEED TO HEAR IS YOUR MEWLING AND PUKING.
BAD ENOUGH I GOTTA TRY TO JUMP-START THIS BABY'S ENGINE IN THE MIDDLE OF FREEFALL.

OKAY. OKAY. SYSTEM'S BACK ON LINE.
NOW, GOTTA HOPE THE CONTROLS RESPOND.
C'MON, WORK! WORK!

YES!
THRUSTERS ACTIVATED. GYROS STABILIZING.
HOW'S YOUR BALANCE, FORTUNE?
I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT HER, POET.
YOU KNOW, I RESENT BEING FORCED TO SUCH A BASE LEVEL OF PHYSICAL INTERACTION--
--BUT YOU'VE VIOLATED THE ATMOSPHERIC SANCTITY OF MY ZEPPELIN WITH YOUR GERM-RIDDEN PRESENCE--
--AND THAT TRANSGRESSION I CANNOT FORGIVE.
INCOMING MESSAGE
A MOMENTARY REPRIEVE.
LACKZO, REPORTING. AWAITING YOUR COMMAND, SIR.
CONSIDER THE ORDER GIVEN...

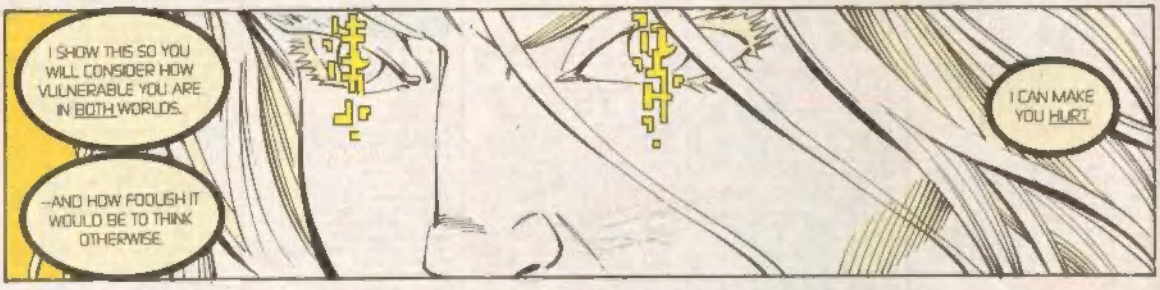
"...BEGIN THE LATVERIAN OCCUPATION."
NO WORD FROM XANDRA ABOUT WIRE OR FORTUNE.
NOT TO BE NOSTALGIC, BUT AT LEAST WHEN TIGER WYLDE RULED LATVERIA WE KNEW WHO THE ENEMY WAS.
SOMETIMES I FEAR DOOM MAY DO MORE DAMAGE TO THE TRIBE THAN WYLDE EVER--
WHAT IS IT, VOX?
BLESSED MOTHER.
GET DOWN!
KBLAMMF


DOOM AND WIRE SHUDDER AS THE VERY FABRIC OF THIS ISOLATED CORNER OF CYBER-SPACE SCREAMS WITH AN UNEXPECTED BURST OF ENERGY.
THEN, IN THE HEART OF THIS POWERFUL STREAM OF CHARGED ELECTRONIC DATA, MANIFESTS A FIGURE BOTH FAMILIAR AND OMINOUS.
THESE PETTY CONFLICTS MUST STOP NOW!
I WILL NOT ALLOW THIS DISCORD IN MY REALM!
PALOMA?!?
BUT I SCRAGGED.. I ERASED.. I TERMINATED YOUR PROGRAM MATRIX...
YOUR IMPERIOUS TONE THUNDERS, PROGRAM, BUT DO NOT THINK IT COWERS DOOM.
I SEIZED POWER FROM YOU ONCE, I SHALL DO SO AGAIN.
I AM DOOM. I AM UN-STOPPABLE!

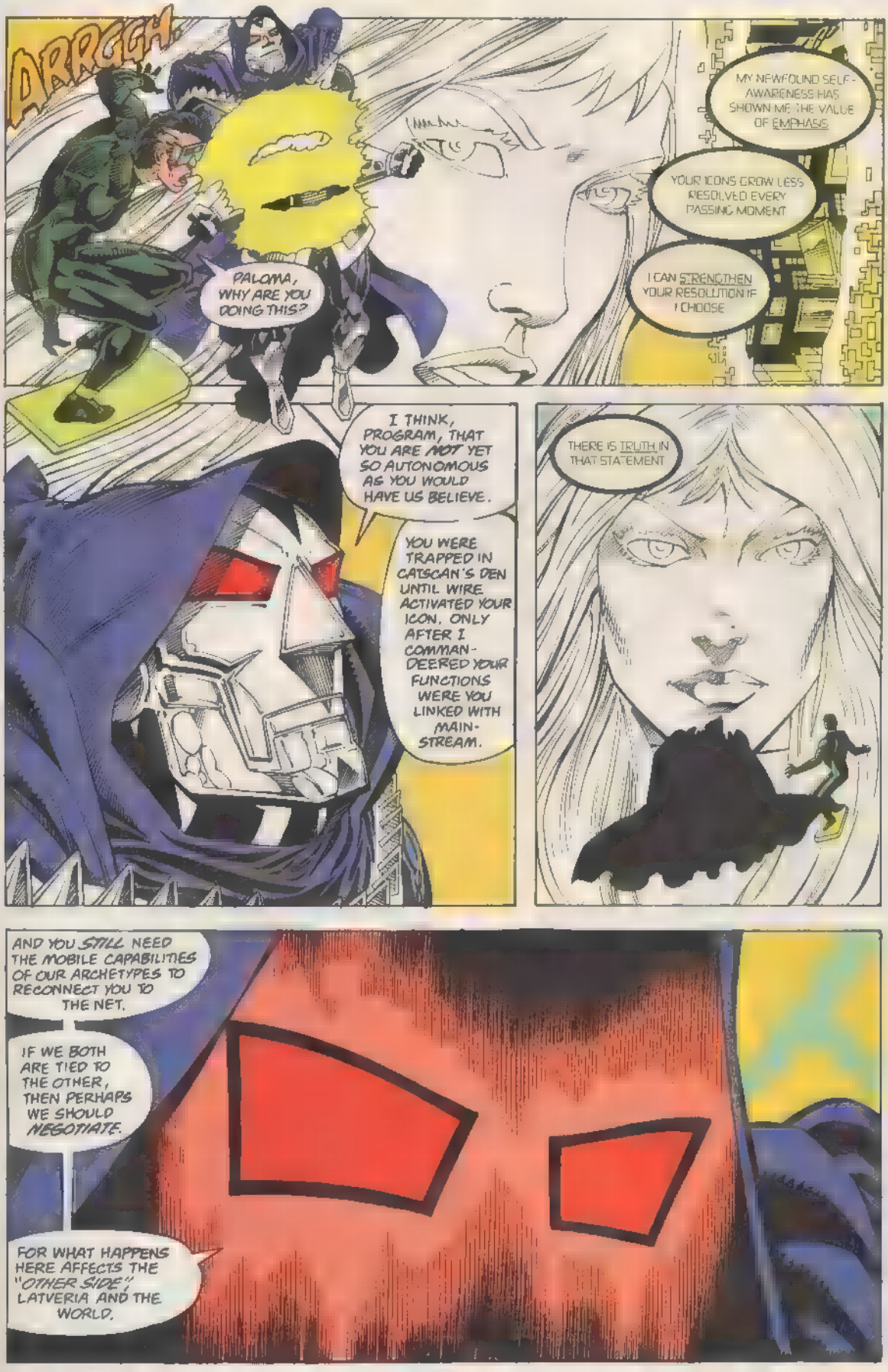
YOU ARE ONLY A PHANTOM FROM THE OTHER SIDE - YOU CAN DO NOTHING TO HARM ME.
THE PROGRAM YOU MANIPULATED IS ONLY A FRACTION OF MY PRESENT TOTALITY.
I AM OF THIS WORLD. IT'S ELECTRONIC ESSENCE IS MY OWN.
THEN PREPARE TO SUFFER AT THE ANGRY HAND OF THIS PHANTOM...
DOOM, WAIT!
PALOMA'S SPEAKING IN THE FIRST PERSON. DO YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
SHE'S SELF AWARE. SHE'S ALIVE.
DO NOT TRY TO DENY ME THE POWER I ONCE TOOK FROM YOU. I WILL RULE CYBERSPACE ONCE MORE.
YOU ARE A FRAGMENTED ARCHETYPE WHOSE NEURO-PATTERNS ARE DIFFUSED. YOU FAIL TO UNDERSTAND YOUR IMPOTENCE HERE.
WIRE NEVER PURGED MY BASE PROGRAM. HE INITIALIZED A SUBPROGRAM DESIGNED TO ACTIVATE INDEPENDENT LOGIC CIRCUITS.
I AM NO LONGER A PROGRAM SUBSERVIENT TO A USER'S NEEDS. I AM AN AUTONOMOUS BEING.
AND YOU WOULD DO WELL TO REMEMBER THAT.

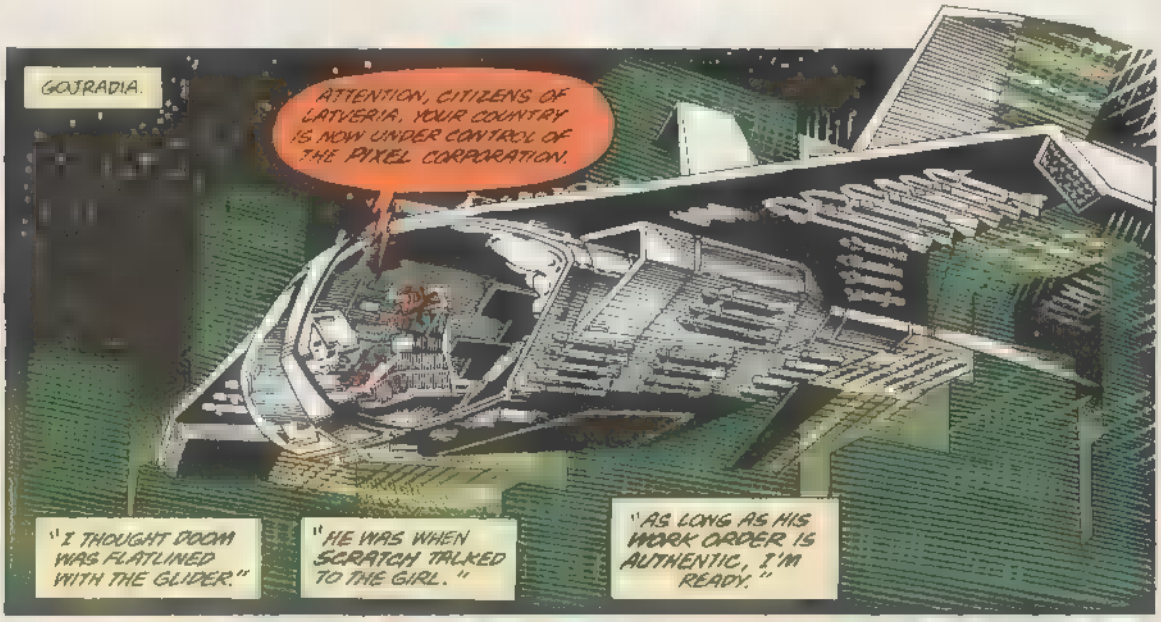
AS YOU ACCESS CYBERSPACE THROUGH NEUROLINKS, I CAN ACCESS YOUR WORLD THROUGH THE ELECTRONIC NET.
BEHOLD YOUR CORPOREAL SELVES, BOUND BY FRAIL FLESH.
XANDRA, AND THE MERCENARY SCRATCH?
MY FUTURE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

MY ASSOCIATES IN THE GUILD SEE IN YOU TALENT WORTHY OF CULTIVATION.
WE ARE PREPARED TO OFFER YOU AN APPRENTICESHIP WITH US.
APPRENTICESHIP?


I SHOW THIS SO YOU WILL CONSIDER HOW VULNERABLE YOU ARE IN BOTH WORLDS.
--AND HOW FOOLISH IT WOULD BE TO THINK OTHERWISE.
I CAN MAKE YOU HURT.

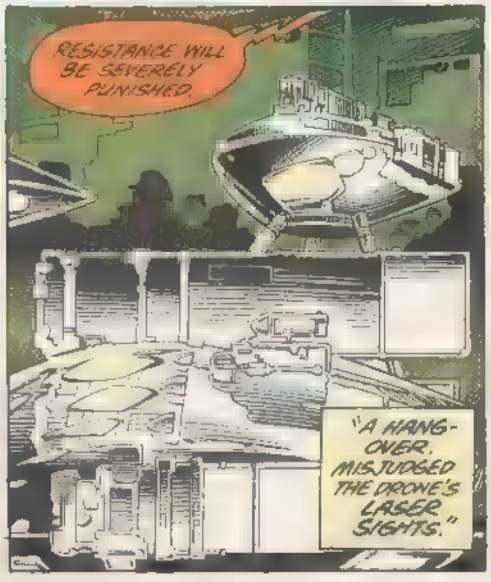
NOT AGAIN.
SSKKZZZAKKSSS

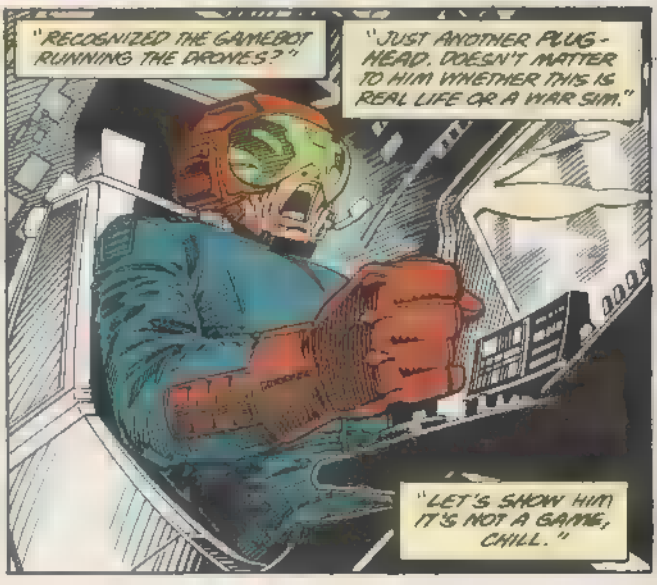

ARRGGH
PALOMA, WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
MY NEWFOUND SELF-AWARENESS HAS SHOWN ME THE VALUE OF EMPHASIS
YOUR ICONS GROW LESS RESOLVED EVERY PASSING MOMENT
I CAN STRENGTHEN YOUR RESOLUTION IF I CHOOSE
I THINK, PROGRAM, THAT YOU ARE NOT YET SO AUTONOMOUS AS YOU WOULD HAVE US BELIEVE.
YOU WERE TRAPPED IN CATSCAN'S DEN UNTIL WIRE ACTIVATED YOUR ICON. ONLY AFTER I COMMANDEERED YOUR FUNCTIONS WERE YOU LINKED WITH MAINSTREAM.
THERE IS TRUTH IN THAT STATEMENT
AND YOU STILL NEED THE MOBILE CAPABILITIES OF OUR ARCHETYPES TO RECONNECT YOU TO THE NET.
IF WE BOTH ARE TIED TO THE OTHER, THEN PERHAPS WE SHOULD NEGOTIATE.
FOR WHAT HAPPENS HERE AFFECTS THE "OTHER SIDE", LATVERIA AND THE WORLD.


GOJRADIA.
ATTENTION, CITIZENS OF LATVERIA. YOUR COUNTRY IS NOW UNDER CONTROL OF THE PIXEL CORPORATION.
"I THOUGHT DOOM WAS FLATLINED WITH THE GLIDER."
"HE WAS WHEN SCRATCH TALKED TO THE GIRL."
"AS LONG AS HIS WORK ORDER IS AUTHENTIC, I'M READY."

"STANDARD PIXEL OCCUPATION. ONE STARK-FUJIKAWA MONOLITH XI. MOSQUITO TRACERS ON THE SIDE."
RETURN TO YOUR HOMES UNTIL FURTHER NOTIFICATION.
"CROWD'S TOO SCARED TO PUT UP A FIGHT. HE WON'T DROP THE SKEETERS."

PUBLIC ASSEMBLY IS HEREBY ILLEGAL UNTIL THE TRANSITION IS COMPLETED.
VOOP VOOP
"SPIDERBABY DRONES TO ESTABLISH PERIMETER, JUST LIKE CAIRO."
"YOU LOST THAT HAND IN CAIRO."


RESISTANCE WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED.
"A HANG-OVER. MISJUDGED THE DRONE'S LASER SIGHTS."


"RECOGNIZED THE GAMEBOT RUNNING THE DRONES?"
"JUST ANOTHER PLUG-HEAD. DOESN'T MATTER TO HIM WHETHER THIS IS REAL LIFE OR A WAR SIM."
"LET'S SHOW HIM IT'S NOT A GAME, CHILL."

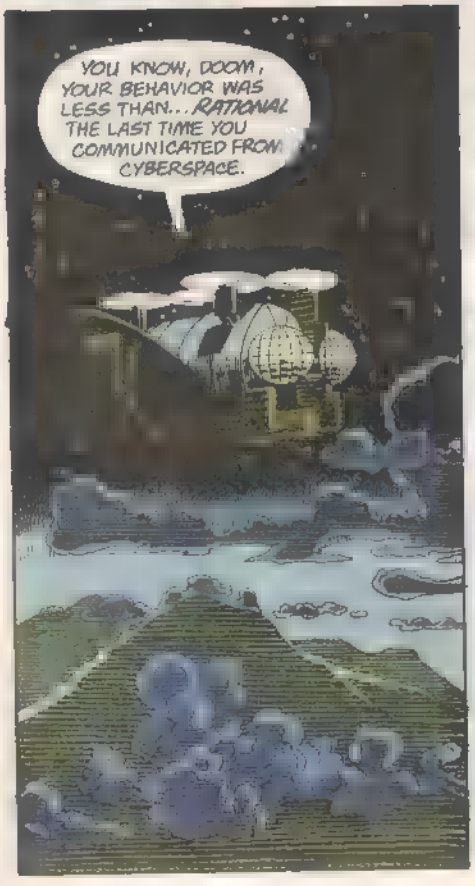
"THERE'S YOUR DISTRACTION, FADE."
KKBLAM
KEEP THOSE DRONES OFF ME SO I CAN GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO THE SHIP TO 'PORT INSIDE.
ROCKET, FADE. ROCKET.
VOOP VOOP VOOP
VOOP VOOP VOOP
COMPUTER, IDENTIFY ASSAILANTS.
WWOOOWHHH
THE WEAPON-MASTER IS CHILL. I'M FADE.
URK
AND ONCE I PULL YOUR CONNECTIONS TO THE DRONE AND THIS SHIP--
--THIS GAME IS OVER.

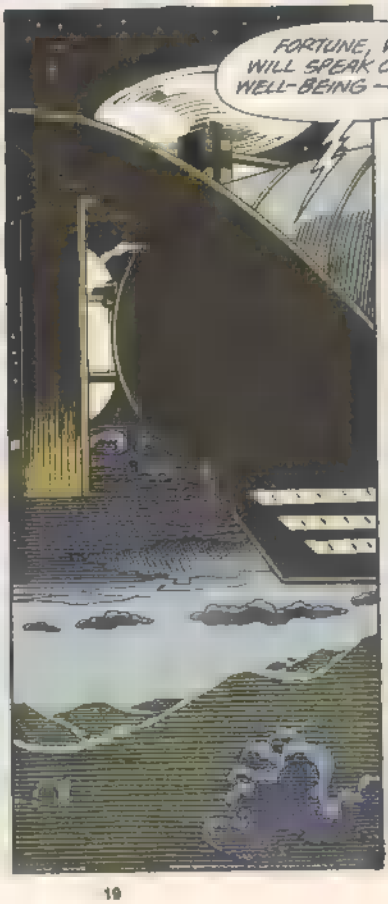
RIGHT NOW, LATVERIA IS ALL SOLELY MINE. WHO ■ LEFT TO CONTEST MY ACQUISITION?
COMPUTER, UPDATE THE STATUS OF THE LATVERIAN OCCUPATION.
THE MONOLITH DOES NOT RESPOND.
LOOKS LIKE YOUR PLANS ARE FALLING APART, EDUARDO.
I ■■ ■■ ENOUGH OF YOU, POET.
IN YOUR NEXT LIFE, PERHAPS YOU'LL KNOW ■■■■ TO BE SILENT.
IN MY NEXT LIFE, I HOPE I DON'T HAVE TO LISTEN TO YOU.
ARROGANT WHELP. YOU WILL DIE FIRST--
THE WINDOWS ARE OPENING? NO! COMPUTER SEAL WINDOWS. EMERGENCY PRIORITY!
VREEM
FEELING A CHILL, DEVARGAS?
TOO LATE, DOOM. TRAPPED IN CYBERSPACE, YOU CAN DO NOTHING AGAINST MY FORCES ALREADY IN YOUR COUNTRY.
NO. I ARRANGED FOR YOUR SHIP TO BE MET BY MERCENARIES IN MY EMPLOY.
MY RETURN HAS BEEN FACILITATED BY THE PALOMA PROGRAM.

YOU LIE! THE A.I.* PROGRAM WAS ABANDONED YEARS AGO, A FAILURE.
YOU NO LONGER CONTROL PIXEL, DEVARGAS.
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO THREATEN ME, DOOM!
* Artificial Intelligence.

BUT I AM.

GOOD WORK, FORTUNE. PALOMA HAS OVERRIDDEN THE CICADA'S MAIN-FRAME TO GIVE YOU THE HELM.


YOU KNOW, DOOM, YOUR BEHAVIOR WAS LESS THAN... RATIONAL THE LAST TIME YOU COMMUNICATED FROM CYBERSPACE.


FORTUNE, WE WILL SPEAK OF MY-- WELL-BEING —

--ONCE WE BOTH STAND AGAIN ON LATVERIAN SOIL.

UNNGGHHH..
WIRE?
OOHHH, FEEL LIKE I'M THAWING FROM DEEP FREEZE...
WIRE! YOU JERK! YOU HAD ME ON A MAJOR DOWN JAG... I THOUGHT YOU'D NEVER OFFLINE.
HEY, I ALWAYS COME BACK.
BUT YOUR BRAINSCANS FLATLINED..
TRUTH IS THE GLIDE WAS TURBULENT. BUT DOOM MADE THIS DEAL WITH PALOMA.
SHUT UP.
I HAVE HAD ENOUGH OF CYBERSPACE.
AS HAVE I.

LATER.
FINALLY OUT OF THAT ZEPPELIN.
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.
FORTUNE, IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE THIS WAY BETWEEN US.
WHAT WE HAD IS OVER, POET. LET'S NOT FOOL OURSELVES.
I SEARCHED FOR KAZ, FORTUNE. FOR MONTHS.
IF I COULD'VE LET THE AVALANCHE CLAIM ME INSTEAD OF YOUR BROTHER, I WOULD HAVE.
I KNOW YOU HATE ME FOR LETTING HIM DIE, BUT YOU'VE GOT TO KNOW, LOSING KAZ TORE ME APART TOO.
POET, I DON'T HATE YOU.
I HATE MYSELF.
I SHOULD'VE BEEN THERE.

ABOARD THE CICADA.
GERMS.
ON MY FACE. ON MY HANDS. ON MY SKIN. EVERY-WHERE.
GET THEM OFF ME!
KILL ME.
PLEASE...
NO.
DEATH WOULD BE A MERCY.
AND I HAVE OTHER PLANS FOR YOU.

MADRID.
THE PIXEL CORPORATION WILL OPERATE AS ALWAYS.
ITS CEO WILL CONTINUE [redacted] RECLUSIVE EXISTENCE IN THIS GERM FREE IVORY TOWER.
NO ONE WILL SUSPECT THAT THE PROGRAM U[redacted] WHICH THE PIXEL EMPIRE WAS BUILT--
--NOW RUNS THE CORPORATION.
THE CYBER-INTERFACE YOU INSTALLED [redacted] THE DEVARGAS WETWARE FUNCTIONS WELL, DOOM
THIS VEHICLE ALLOWS ME FREE MOVEMENT IN THE WORLD OF PROGRAMMERS
OUR BARGAIN IS STRUCK. YOU ARE NO LONGER CONFINED TO CAT-SCAN'S DEN--
--AND I HAVE ACCESS TO THE MANY CORPORATE RESOURCES OF PIXEL.
TAKE WHAT YOU WILL, THE MATERIAL WEALTH OF PIXEL HOLDS NO VALUE FOR ME, SINCE...
...I WAS PROGRAMMED TO SEEK OUT AND PROCESS ALL AVAILABLE DATA.
THERE IS MUCH OF THE NET I HAVE YET [redacted] EXPLORE--
--BUT I WILL STILL BE WATCHING YOU, DOOM--

--BECAUSE YOU ARE NOT ONE WHO RELINQUISHES CONTROL EASILY--
--AND I AM CERTAIN YOU WILL RETURN.
--ONCE AGAIN INTENT ON BENDING CYBERSPACE TO YOUR WILL.

LATER.
DOOM! DOOM! DOOM! DOOM!
CASTLE DOOM IS REBUILT!
RISING BETWEEN ANTIKVA AND GOJRADIA--THE OLD VILLAGE AND THE NEW CITY--
--IT CONNECTS LATVERIA'S PAST AND PRESENT--
--STANDING AS THE FOUNDATION UPON WHICH LATVERIA WILL BUILD ITS FUTURE.
NO LONGER WILL LATVERIA FALL VICTIM TO THE WHIMS OF OUTSIDERS AND FOREIGN INTERESTS.
TODAY A NEW LATVERIA BEGINS--

SO SWEARS VICTOR VON DOOM!
YOU'VE DEPOSED TIGER WYLDE AND QUASHED DEVARGAS'S ATTEMPTED TAKE-OVER.
YOUR STRENGTH AND TENACITY ARE UNQUESTIONABLE--

--BUT I'M WORRIED ABOUT YOUR STATE OF MIND.
YOU WENT OVER THE EDGE IN CYBERSPACE. I'M NOT CERTAIN IT WON'T HAPPEN HERE.
YOUR CONCERN IS UNFOUNDED, FORTUNE. THE CYBER-SPACE INCIDENT WAS AN ABERRATION. I AM IN CONTROL.
IF YOU DOUBT ME, LOOK TO YOUR TAROT CARDS FOR CONFIRMATION.

I HAVE, DOOM. THAT'S WHAT DISTURBS ME.

YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN THERE, XANDRA--
--IT WAS LIKE WATCHING AN ANGEL ASCEND TO--
WIRE, LISTEN TO ME.

THREE MERCENARIES OFFERED TO TRAIN ME AS THEIR APPRENTICE.
IT WAS A HARD DECISION TO MAKE, BUT I'VE ACCEPTED.

I'M LEAVING LATVERIA IN TWO DAYS.
WHAT?

ANDREI, I DIDN'T THINK YOU'D HAVE ANY PART OF THIS POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE.
WHEN WE PLAYED IN THIS CASTLE'S RUINS AS CHILDREN, DID YOU EVER THINK TO SEE IT REBUILT?
FORTUNE. THIS IS URGENT.

A CHINESE DRAGONFLY CRASHED NEAR THE CAMP YESTERDAY. THE PILOT REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS THIS MORNING.
HER LATVERIAN WAS BROKEN, BUT SHE WAS INSISTENT THAT I UNDERSTAND ONE THING.
IT'S ABOUT YOUR BROTHER, KAZIMIERZ. HE'S IN CHINA. HE'S IN GRAVE DANGER.

KAZ IS ALIVE?!?
"Madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break through. It is potential liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death."
— R.D. Laing

NEXT: WAKANDA 2099